

Opening Statement of Chairman Henry J. Hyde
Full Committee Hearing
The U.S. and India: An Emerging Entente?
Thursday, September 8, 2005, 10:30 a.m.
2172 Rayburn House Office Building

The announcement on July 18th that the United States and India were “transforming” their relationship into a “global partnership” has been greeted with an array of reactions in this country that range from elation to complacency, and even to alarm. In truth, it is difficult for someone not privy to the relevant negotiations to judge the agreement’s merits, especially when confronted with its very general and anodyne declaration that the U.S. and India will “work together to provide global leadership in areas of mutual concern and interest” such as promoting “stability, democracy, prosperity and peace throughout the world.”

Such sweeping statements require close scrutiny, which is why we have asked you gentlemen to appear before us today.

This agreement has been portrayed by the Administration and many others as being of great strategic significance. Perhaps it is. Few can question the significance of India’s growing role in the world or the importance of our having good relations with that enormous country. However, the larger geostrategic impact is more uncertain as the consequences of this and subsequent agreements on the alignment of forces in the new international system now emerging will take many years to become evident.

More concretely, given that India, as with all countries, can be expected to act in its own interests, however wisely or foolishly it conceives them, what assumptions are we making regarding the impact of this agreement on India’s perceptions and likely actions? Will it in fact change anything? Will we secure India’s cooperation in areas that otherwise would not be forthcoming? Have we already done so?

It also appears that, in addition to the commitments outlined in the public announcement, several understandings of one type or another have been reached between the two parties, some of which may have been consigned to writing, others perhaps encapsulated in a wink and a nod. To the extent that it is possible in an open hearing, the Committee would like to learn the entirety of our expectations.

The announcement of the agreement lists a number of cooperative policies the two countries will undertake, including several in the areas of trade and economic development, the environment, and space exploration, among others. Although, in general, these initiatives appear to be worthy endeavors, their collective substance is hardly the stuff of grand statements. Clearly, the most important elements are those concerning combating terrorism, especially weapons of mass destruction, as well as the more controversial promise of cooperation regarding India's civilian nuclear energy program.

Judging the likely impact of this agreement on U.S. interests requires weighing these factors in two separate contexts, one nestled within the other. The first is whether the net impact on our nonproliferation policy is positive or negative. If the answer is the latter, the second and larger question is whether or not the strategic benefits gained outweigh any potential damage to that same policy.

Those, in a nutshell, are the questions that I hope you gentlemen can help us resolve today. I look forward to being enlightened by your testimony and by your answers to the questions that will follow.

Now let me turn to my good friend, Tom Lantos, for any remarks he may wish to make.